

Classmates shared engineering dream through

school and university



Shared journey: Engineering students, from left, Kelsey Paterson, Olivia Heaslip, Chloe McKenzie, Kelsey Keenan and Anna-Lisa Fraser graduated from the University of Canterbury together, after starting out in the same science classes at Southland Girls' High School.

Lauren Hayes

Five Southland women are helping to change the face of engineering.

Engineering students Kelsey Paterson, Olivia Heaslip, Chloe McKenzie, Kelsey Keenan and Anna-Lisa Fraser graduated from the University of Canterbury this semester, after beginning their science journey as classmates at Southland Girls' High School.

The five shared physics, chemistry and calculus classes at the high school, before heading north to university.

McKenzie, 22, said it was cool the former school friends were

able to graduate together, made more special by the fact engineering was still a male-dominated field.

At university, engineering pupils were generally men, so it was rare for five women from the same school to graduate together, she said.

"You don't really see that."

McKenzie now works for Opus International Consultants in Christchurch, as a civil structural graduate engineer.

Her job, which she landed after university classes wrapped up at the end of last year, involved assessing the strength of about 900 bridges in the Canterbury region, designing new bridges and

assessing truck permits, she said. She believed being a born and bred Southlander was a plus for those wanting to enter the engineering field.

"Having the farming background, and the kind of down-to-earth Southland way, helps you a lot in the work force, especially in a highly male-dominated field."

However, the gender balance could be changing, as more young women like McKenzie enter the field.

McKenzie is doing her bit, returning to her alma mater to encourage more girls to take up the challenge of engineering.



Having fun: Chloe McKenzie now works for Opus International Consultants in Christchurch as a civil structural graduate engineer.

Photo: FAIRFAX NZ

Engineering dream shared by Girls' High students

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"I always try to go into school when I can and talk about engineering, because it is actually fun," she said.

Their Southland Girls' High School physics teacher Paul King said the women were bright sparks who focused on their work.

They all had an underlying ability in the hard sciences, King said.

Girls' High is breaking down the

stereotype of engineering being for males by working in partnership with the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter.

In the partnership, student spend time at the smelter to learn about engineering in the workforce.

Heaslip, Paterson and Fraser are also now working in the field, in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.

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